

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

October 17, 2002

Research conducted by USDA-ARS on the genetics of CWD infected white-tailed deer from Nebraska indicate that genetics does not have anything to do with the susceptibility of white-tail deer. The genetic makeup of 114 infected and non-infected animals were classified at Pullman, Washington. Results indicate that there are 6 major genotypes and 5 minor genotypes in the deer studied. All major genotypes were represented in the CWD population. We can conclude that CWD is not likely to be a genetic disease in white-tail deer.

Governor John Hoeven of North Dakota has issued an emergency order barring the importation of elk and deer carcasses from areas known to have CWD. The ban effects whole carcasses, the spinal cord and head. Processed meat and taxidermy heads can still be imported. The order was issued after a North Dakota hunter brought back an elk carcass from Colorado that tested positive for CWD.

A fourth captive deer farm in Wisconsin has been quarantined due to trace backs from the one positive CWD deer in a Portage County facility. The latest facility placed under quarantine is located in Dane County, just a few miles from the eradication zone where free-ranging white-tail deer have been confirmed with CWD.

A second deer farm in Wisconsin has had a white-tail deer test positive for CWD. This facility is located in Walworth County in the southeast part of the state. This brings the total of known CWD positive farmed deer to two for Wisconsin. The new case is approximately 80 miles from the Wisconsin eradication zone where free-ranging white-tail deer have been found with CWD.

A panel of experts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison has evaluated the Wisconsin DNR efforts to combat CWD and issued their findings. Their main findings are; 1) support of the DNR efforts to eradicate 25,000 deer in the eradication zone around Mt. Horeb, 2) the human health risk of eating venison infected with CWD is very, very low; and 3) deer hunters should not rely on testing to judge the safety of venison.

Archer and muzzleloader hunters in Colorado are passing on CWD testing of their harvested animals. So far, only about 1 in 5 of the successful hunters are submitting the heads of their animals for testing. 1,469 samples have been tested with 18 hunter killed animals and 2 officer killed animals testing positive from or close to the endemic area. The story for elk hunters is different as 700 samples were received in the Colorado State University Lab the first few days of the elk season.

Governor Scott McCallum of Wisconsin has announced that agreement has been reached with USDA-APHIS to provide for additional testing of deer for CWD for Wisconsin hunters. USDA has agreed to provide laboratory capacity for up to 200,000 samples this fall. Wisconsin DNR will test 50,000 samples at state expense. Other hunters may have a sample taken by their veterinarian and the veterinarian will send the sample to the National Veterinary Lab in Ames, Iowa. The tests will cost the hunter between \$50 - \$75 each.

A emergency task force in Colorado, convened by Governor Bill Owens, will make several recommendations to the Governor reference the state's efforts to combat CWD. One of the major recommendations will be for mandatory double fencing around deer and elk ranches exposed to CWD. Other recommendations include continuation of efforts to expand the capacity of testing facilities and continued research and funding for a rapid CWD test.

The count keeps climbing in Wisconsin. There were 358 deer harvested in August and 9 of these tested positive for CWD. This gives a total of 40 positive of approximately 1500 tested for an infection rate of 2.6%.